



Life Stress Test

1997 Dr. Tim Lowenstein
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<http://www.cliving.org/lifestresstest.htm>

In the past 12 months, which of the following major life events have taken place in your life?

1. Print out this form (if accessing from the web).
2. Make a check mark next to each event that you have experienced this year.
3. When you're done, add up the points for each event.
4. Check your score at the bottom.

- ☐ Death of spouse 100
- ☐ Divorce 73
- ☐ Marital separation 65
- ☐ Jail term 63
- ☐ Death of close family member 63
- ☐ Personal injury or illness 53
- ☐ Marriage 50
- ☐ Fired from work 47
- ☐ Marital reconciliation 45
- ☐ Retirement 45
- ☐ Change in family member's health 44
- ☐ Pregnancy 40
- ☐ Sexual difficulties 39
- ☐ Addition to family 39
- ☐ Business readjustment 39
- ☐ Change in financial status 38
- ☐ Death of close friend 37
- ☐ Change to a different line of work 36
- ☐ Change in number of marital arguments 35
- ☐ Mortgage or loan over \$10,000 31
- ☐ Foreclosure of mortgage or loan 30
- ☐ Change in work responsibilities 29
- ☐ Trouble with in-laws 29

Participant's name (optional) _____ 1.10

- ___ Outstanding personal achievement 28
- ___ Spouse begins or stops work 26
- ___ Starting or finishing school 26
- ___ Change in living conditions 25
- ___ Revision of personal habits 24
- ___ Trouble with boss 23
- ___ Change in work hours, conditions 20
- ___ Change in residence 20
- ___ Change in schools 20
- ___ Change in recreational habits 19
- ___ Change in church activities 19
- ___ Change in social activities 18
- ___ Mortgage or loan under \$10,000 17
- ___ Change in sleeping habits 16
- ___ Change in number of family gatherings 15
- ___ Change in eating habits 15
- ___ Vacation 13
- ___ Christmas season 12
- ___ Minor violations of the law 11

___ **Your total score**

This scale shows the kind of life pressure that you are facing. Depending on your coping skills or the lack thereof, this scale can predict the likelihood that you will fall victim to a stress related illness. The illness could be mild-frequent tension headaches, acid indigestion, and loss of sleep-to a very serious illness like ulcers, cancer, migraines and the like.

Life Stress Scores

0-149 Low susceptibility to stress-related illness

150-299 Medium susceptibility to stress-related illness

Learn and practice relaxation and stress management skills and a healthy well life style.

300 and over High susceptibility to stress-related illness

Daily practice of relaxation skills is very important for your wellness. Take care of it now before a serious illness erupts or an affliction becomes worse.

Participant's name (optional)_____1.10



Module 1

Preparing for the Journey by Taking Care of the Service Coordinator

Coping with Stress



Coping with Stress

The University of Iowa
University Counseling Service

Created as a handout by
Carolyn Mildner, M.A.

Attribution:

www.uiowa.edu/~ucs/copstress.html

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1.11



What is stress?

Stress is defined as any change that you must adapt to in our ever-changing world. In particular, stress is any demand (force, pressure, strain) placed on the body and the body's reaction to it.





Stress is experienced by everyone who is living, working, and breathing at this very moment. It is a fact of life you cannot avoid. Stress, itself, ranges in intensity from the negative extreme of being in physical danger to the joy of completing a desired goal.





Not all stress is bad. It is important to identify how you respond to stressful events. This will determine the impact that these experiences have on your life.

Assess your current stressors and explore ways that you respond to them.

Generate a list of current events that produce stress in your life (i.e., moved to new location, work or school demands, balancing priorities, job promotion).





Brainstorm how you cope with stressful experiences.
Assess if you have a healthy or unhealthy coping style.

Healthy Coping Skills

- Exercise
- Downtime for self-care
- Balance between work and play
- Time management—initiate a schedule

Unhealthy Coping Skills

- Alcohol or drug use
- Avoidance of event
- Procrastination
- Overeating



After identifying stressors and coping styles, you can begin to modify your behavior.

Be aware of your physiological and emotional reaction to stress.

Recognize what you can change (your reactions to stress, internal thoughts).

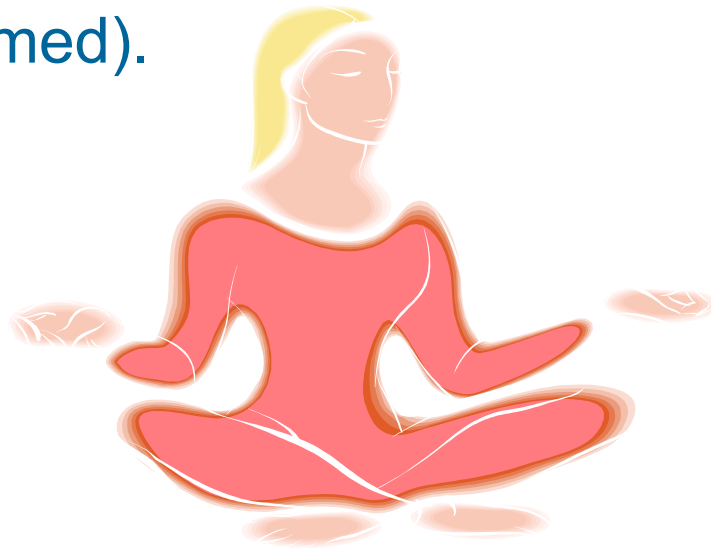
Utilize healthy coping skills.





Incorporate good coping skills into your repertoire, increasing your options.

Practice healthy coping skills daily even when intense stress is not present (this prepares you for times when you may feel overwhelmed).





Relaxation techniques

Recognize what activities you consider relaxing.

Be specific when exploring your options:

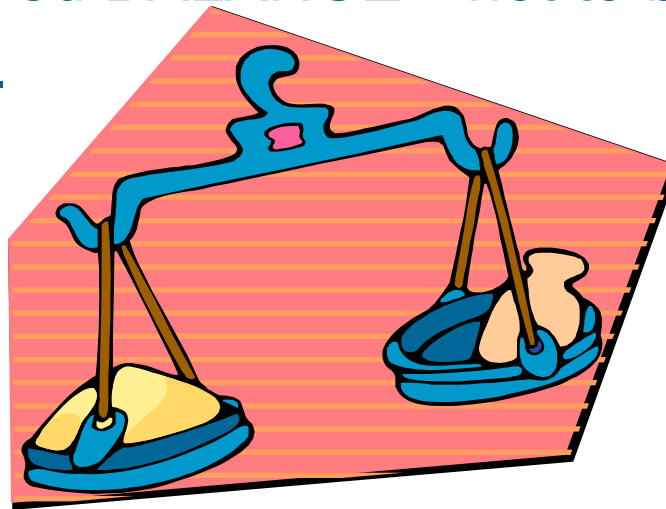
- going for walks
- meeting with friends
- reading for pleasure
- listening to music
- taking a bath



Be realistic about the amount of time that you can dedicate to downtime.

This time should be incorporated into your daily routine.

Remember this is called **BALANCE**—not to be used as a procrastination tactic.





Begin practicing relaxation techniques

- meditation
- guided imagery
- deep breathing exercises
- progressive relaxation (muscle relaxation)

Decide which relaxation technique works for you and practice daily.

Find several techniques that work for you so you have an array of options.



Stress management techniques

Body:

Along with improving your ability to relax, you must assess diet and other strains on your body.

Aerobic exercise can reduce anxiety up to 50%.

Good nutrition (a well-balanced diet) will improve your ability to appropriately respond to stress.

Get an adequate amount of rest each night.



Reducing caffeine intake will help you manage your anxiety (2 ½ cups of coffee doubles the epinephrine level).

Smoking cessation is important, as nicotine is also a stimulant.

Biofeedback techniques can help up to 80% of migraine sufferers.

Acupuncture has also shown promise.





Mind:

If you have multiple stressors (deadlines, increased responsibilities), you must prioritize your time.

Initiating a *time management* schedule remains a positive way to reduce stress and anxiety.

Break large demands into small, manageable parts. Work through one task at a time.

Do what needs to be done first, leaving other things for tomorrow.

Identify your goals and work toward them.



Take direct action when stress arises—identify your needs and articulate them. Be intentional about what you can do.

Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings concerning the stressors in your life.

Develop a support network to rely on in times of need.

Remember to be kind to yourself and not dwell on the *shoulds*.





Recommended readings:

- *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff...and It's All Small Stuff*. New York, NY: Hyperion, 1997. Carson, R.
- *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 1988. Davis, M., Eshelman, E., & McCay, M.



A Little Relief Can Go a Long Way

Learning to relax takes time and practice. The skilled use of relaxation techniques can be developed. Brief relaxation activities can help you find relief from stress-related symptoms.

Relief from stress can be found through a variety of activities such as progressive muscle relaxation, massage, music, exercise, meditation, and even by singing along with the radio in the car on the way to see a family. Learning to breathe deeply and fully can help relieve tight muscles that cause pain and discomfort.

Service coordinators can include simple stress relievers in their daily routines. Small efforts to reduce stress, completed in short amounts of time, can lead to big results. Keep in mind that people have different opinions about techniques they find to be stress-relieving. If you find the scent of candles offensive, then obviously this would not be helpful to you. Remember to be considerate of those around you as well. You wouldn't want to become the source of someone else's stress. Take a little time to think of simple ways to reduce your level of stress throughout the day. It can be surprising what a five or ten minute break can do for you.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Activity

1. Light a scented candle.
2. Dim the lights.
3. Use an audiotape or cd of choice that promotes relaxation.
4. Find a comfortable position.
5. Tense and relax each muscle group. Tense each group tightly for a few seconds, followed by completely releasing and relaxing each group. Begin with your hands by tightening them into fists, and holding. Then release. Progress from tensing your hands to your arms, shoulders, forehead, eyes, cheeks, and lips. Bend your neck forward and relax. Breathe in deeply, and hold your breath. Then exhale. Tighten and release tummy muscles, hips, legs, and toes. Feeling better?



List three things you can do to relieve the symptoms of stress:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Service Coordinator's Anti-Stress Diet

(Adapted from *Women's Anti-Stress Diet*—Author Unknown)

This is a specially formulated diet designed to help people cope with the stress that builds up during the day.

Breakfast

1 grapefruit, 1 slice of whole-wheat toast, and 1 cup of skim milk



Lunch

Small portion, lean, steamed chicken with a cup of spinach

1 cup of herbal tea, and 1 Hershey's Kiss



Afternoon Tea

The rest of the kisses in the bag, and 1 tub of Häagen Dazs ice cream with chocolate chip topping



Dinner

Four bottles of wine, 2 loaves of garlic bread, 1 family size supreme pizza, and 3 Snickers bars



Late Night Snack

Whole frozen Sara Lee Cheesecake (eaten directly from the freezer)



Remember: Stressed Spelled Backwards Is “Desserts”

Share this with all the service coordinators you know or ever knew, and you will immediately lose ten pounds!



WARNING

If you ignore this you will gain 10 pounds immediately.
(You want to take the chance?)



Module 1

Preparing for the Journey
by
Taking Care of the Service Coordinator

You Can Make a Difference in Our Lives



You Can Make a Difference in Our Lives

Poem by Janice Fialka, MSW, ACSW

Fialka, J. (1997, 2001). *It matters: Lessons from my son*. Huntington Woods, MI: Author.

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One

You have the opportunity not to be frightened by our anger...

to embrace it, to welcome it, and even to invite it on a good day.

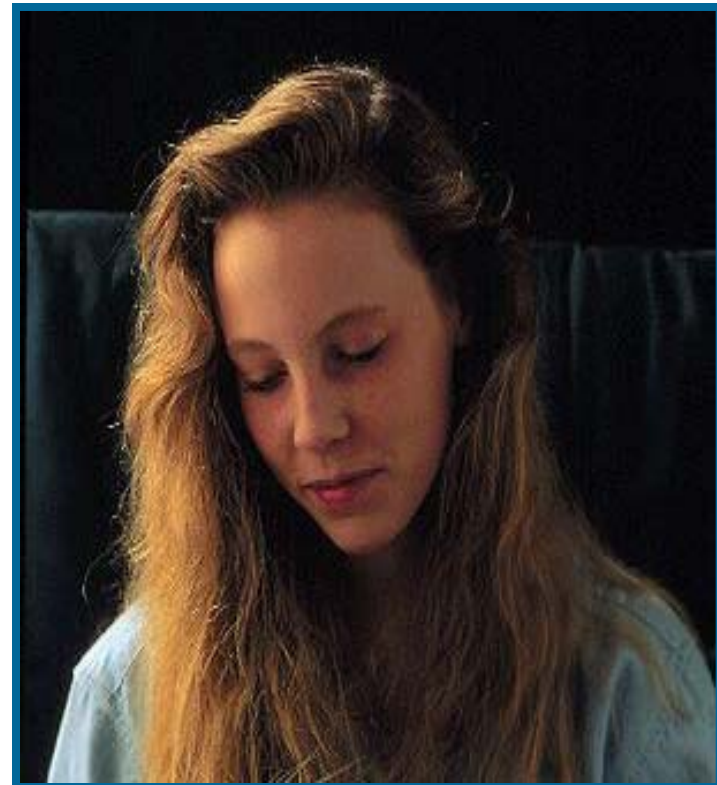
Obviously, you cannot do it every day.





Two

You have the opportunity to decrease our profound sense of loneliness.





Three

You have the opportunity to anticipate and normalize our feelings.





Four

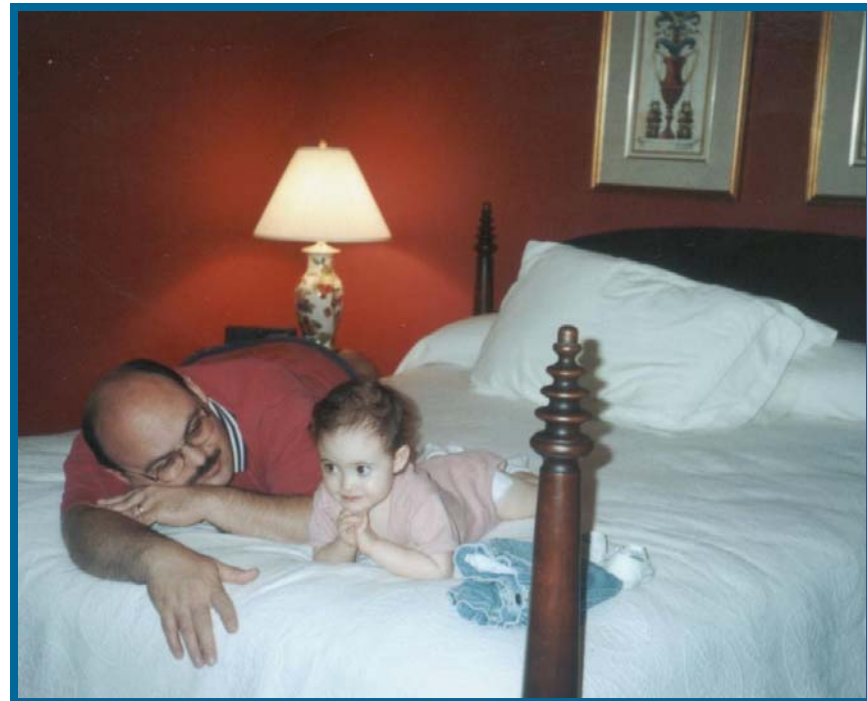
You have the opportunity to help us re-enter the “world of normal families.”





Five

You have the
opportunity to help
us know our child.





Six

You have the opportunity to share books, pamphlets, and other resources.





Seven

You have the opportunity to recognize and celebrate our victories.





Eight

You have the opportunity to remind us how far we have come and how much we have accomplished.





Nine

You have the opportunity to allow us those moments when our souls fall into deep despair.





Ten

If at times you can do some of these nine suggested activities, you will then have the opportunity to help us feel hope.

